

Roots of Resilience

The 2026 DRWC Flag Exhibition Spruce Street Harbor Park (SSHP)

May 22 – September 1, 2026

Public Reception: June 13 from 2-4pm at SSHP (under the flags)

In "Roots of Resilience," sixteen artists were selected from a call for applications to design flags that tell stories of hope, strength, and community, honoring the journeys of those who made Philly their home. From textiles to digital art, these powerful flags will fly at Spruce Street Harbor Park from **May 22, 2026, to September 7, 2026.**

The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) is pleased to present the opening of its third consecutive flag exhibition, "Roots of Resilience," featuring 16 national and international artists. Displayed throughout the 2026 summer season at Spruce Street Harbor Park, these pennant flags transform the waterfront into a vibrant tapestry of local and global narratives. The exhibition explores Philadelphia's history as a critical immigration hub, inviting artists to investigate the diverse cultures, contributions, and enduring spirits of those who have shaped the city's identity.

The works in "Roots of Resilience" move beyond broad historical strokes to examine the intimate, material traces of migration. Subthemes of domesticity and memory emerge through digital recreations of historic immigrant spaces, such as the century-old mosaic floors of South Philadelphia's Italian eateries and archival wallpaper motifs that celebrate the home as a sanctuary of cultural preservation. Artists also utilize textile and patchwork traditions, using hand-woven street posters from global cities, assembled silk quilts, and "ghostly" monotypes to symbolize the reclamation of lost spaces.

Other flags reveal deep connections to lineage and the natural world, where photographic imagery of non-native "immigrant" plants thriving in urban sidewalks serves as a metaphor for human adaptation. Other artists draw on ancestral storytelling and ritual, from the symbolic food preparation of Taiwanese tradition to the rhythmic movements of Native American dance and the spiritual weight of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. Through high-contrast public declarations of family survival and poignant reflections on colonial displacement, the flags in this exhibition stand as silent guardians of untold stories, celebrating the courage to leave the familiar and the strength required to take root in new soil.

Marketing Toolkit

Social Media

FB/TikTok: @DelawareRiverWaterfront IG: @Sprucestreetharborpark

Hashtags: #MyPhillyWaterfront #SSHP #RootsofResilience

Website link: TBD

Adrian Adams Jr.

This flag features photographic imagery of immigrant plant life thriving in Philadelphia's urban landscape, drawing a parallel between their journey and that of the diverse people who have made the city their home. By capturing these resilient plants on film, Adams aims to highlight how species originally foreign to the region have woven themselves into Philadelphia's visual and cultural fabric.

Artist Bio:

Born in Camden, New Jersey and raised as a bridge baby between school years in Camden and summers in North Philadelphia, Adrian Adams Jr. is a product of the 1990s shaped by the music, sports, and pop culture of the early 2000s. He is a self-taught photographer rooted in his West Indian lineage; every two years, his father took him and his sisters to Antigua for Carnival, immersing him in Caribbean rhythm, ritual, and ancestral storytelling. These journeys infused his imagination with diasporic color and memory, grounding his artistic identity in a global sense of Black culture.

Jusuf Brkić

This flag features a digital recreation of the mosaic floor from Ralph's, the oldest Italian restaurant in the United States and a cornerstone of South Philadelphia's immigrant history since 1900. Having witnessed over a century of community life, the floral hexagonal pattern serves as a silent custodian of untold stories and a witness to Italian-American resilience. Elevated onto a pennant, "Ralph's Mosaic" invites viewers to consider how traces of local history and immigrant labor can be found in the simplest everyday patterns, even under our feet.

Artist Bio:

Jusuf Brkić (born 2001) is a Bosnian-German painter, illustrator, sculptor, and installation artist. After completing his training at the FOS for Design in Munich and a one-year internship at Gabriele Space (Munich), he began his studies at the Braunschweig University of Art in 2023, studying under David Zink Yi and Abbas Akhavan, among others. Brkić explores the role of painting between window and object, the function and origin of graphic patterns used in everyday life, the aesthetic potential of frozen movement, and the conditions under which situations or objects can be interpreted as art.

Joseph Carrillo

This flag depicts a Native American dancer rising from her roots, using the metaphor of flight to represent historical trauma, healing, and continuing resilience. The inclusion of a red handprint honors the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement, symbolizing both the silenced voices of victims and a traditional connection to the spiritual world. By positioning these elements together, the flag speaks to a collective experience of survival, using the wind's movement to breathe life into a story of enduring hope.

Artist Bio:

As an independent photographer, filmmaker, and graphic artist, Joseph Carrillo draws deep inspiration from his Pacific Islander and Native American heritage, weaving the cultural narratives and spiritual essence into every visual he creates. He enjoys using photography, film and graphic design to tell a story, capture a moment, or inspire further exploration.

Karsten Benjamin Ekhougen Larsen

This flag consists of a sentence: "The average distance a tear travels before it falls from the chin is 10cm (3.93700787 inches)" on a white background. The text refers to objective standardization and its connection to our subjective feelings. Larsen found many stories about how immigrants in Philadelphia had to switch from the imperial system to the metric system, often leading to misunderstandings in the workplace. He sees this switch as not only practical but also symbolic. This flag shows how standardization can be a form of assimilation, survival, and sometimes erasure of your past.

Artist Bio:

Since childhood, Karsten Benjamin Ekhougen Larsen has been fascinated by the concept of distance and the "man-made laws of nature" (like meters or kilometers) that we often mistake for objective reality. Through his work at the art academy in Bergen, he explores and challenges these standards, examining how those in power define the structures that govern our everyday lives. Shaped by an international upbringing in church communities across Europe and the US, he views his art as an open-minded extension of those early existential inquiries and a way to connect with others.

Charlotte Gachet

This flag emerges from a patchwork of fragments from previous projects, utilizing the traditional format of a quilt to treat the flag as a site of memory and personal narrative. The design incorporates assembled fabric patches and painted silk embedded with a monotype, part of an ongoing research project using Google Street View to revisit familiar routes and reflect on the nostalgia of immigration. Highly vibrant and full of movement, this textile banner uses color as a remedy to displacement and a celebration of the transition between past and present.

Artist Bio:

Recently settled in Canada after years in Paris, Gachet developed an artistic practice centered on the memory of home and the reclamation of lost spaces. As a textile designer and silk painter, she uses color, pattern, and the fluid nature of silk to transform textiles into sites of narrative and sensory experience. Drawing from her own migration, her work explores the emotional traces of places left behind, honoring the resilience and enduring strength found in immigrant journeys.

Ruby Gerson

This pennant flag draws from a body of work engaging the history of Philadelphia's professional Jewish basketball team and the social dances they held after games between 1932 and 1949. The design layers a fragile field of pale paper from a facsimile of the team's jersey with an archival image of the team bowing in a huddle, anchored by a ticket on the wide edge. Through these elements, the pennant links past and present, extending Gerson's interest in how sites accumulate myth and how the body measures what no longer stands.

Artist Bio:

Rudy Gerson (b. 1993, New York City; raised in Las Vegas, NV) is an artist and educator working across print, still and moving image, performance, and collaboration in a practice which explores the nature of group identity and social memory. Through subjects like sports, nationalism, and dance, works consider how collective desires are articulated in these contexts, reckoning with the contradictions of contemporary life, particularly where pleasure and violence are entangled.

Galen Gibson-Cornell

This flag features an image made of woven street-posters collected from various cities around the world and hand-woven in Gibson-Cornell's Philadelphia studio. Through a process of "dissection," he slices these materials into strips, removing their original function as advertisements to physically and metaphorically combine different places into a unified new whole. Much like an immigrant's journey, these fragmented elements experience a new potential in their relocation, symbolizing the strength that arises from combining individual, fragile pieces into a cohesive textile.

Artist Bio:

Galen Gibson-Cornell is a Philadelphia-based artist whose practice is rooted in international immersion and the exploration of urban landscapes. After receiving his MFA and a Fulbright Fellowship to Budapest, he developed a signature style using street posters and urban ephemera collected from cities worldwide. His work has been exhibited internationally and is held in notable collections including Microsoft and the Museum of Wisconsin Art; he is currently represented by galleries in Philadelphia, New York, and Tennessee.

Imogen Gosnell

This flag merges Philadelphia's history of immigration with Gosnell's own migrant story, highlighting how oral storytelling and the passing down of traditions. Gosnell features how the artist's Ama (grandmother) and mom would cut apples for her in a single spiral, calling them "Apple Peel Snake Skins". Because apples symbolize safety and well-being in Taiwanese culture, this flag honors the resilience found in preserving histories and traditions that continue to live on far from her homeland.

Artist Bio:

Imogen Gosnell (b. 2001, Providence, RI) is an interdisciplinary artist who works with video, poetry, and desire. She received her BFA from Tyler School of Art in 2023. She currently resides in Philadelphia, PA.

Ekene Ijeoma

This flag features the phrase "A FAMILY SURVIVED TODAY" in white lettering against a stark black background. This work is a site-specific iteration of my ongoing series Survived Today (2024–), aligned with Lucille Clifton's poem Won't you celebrate with me: "come celebrate / with me that everyday / something has tried to kill me / and has failed". As a child of immigrants, this theme is personal to Ijeoma. The flag honors the immigrant experience not just as historical endurance, but as an active, recurring triumph. By centering the word "Family," the design highlights the interconnected unit that sustains this survival. The stark,

high-contrast aesthetic ensures clarity, transforming the flag into a public declaration that resilience is an ongoing process.

Artist Bio:

Ekene Ijeoma is a Nigerian-American conceptual artist and computational designer who researches social, political, and environmental systems to develop multimedia works that expose inequities and empower communities. From 2019–2024, he founded and directed the Poetic Justice Group at MIT Media Lab, a lab for reimagining social justice through art. He also founded Black Forest, a nationwide initiative planting trees as living monuments. His work has been presented by the Boston Public Art Triennial, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Kennedy Center, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis. He lives and works in New York, NY.

Edward Liddle

This flag features a decorative motif based on wallpaper from my archive, reflecting how patterns and soft furnishings allow migrants to express their identity and culture within the domestic sphere. Inspired by Liddle’s Jewish grandmother who fled 1930s Czechoslovakia and recreated her former life in a new home, the design honors the history of owners traveling with these precious commodities to maintain a sense of self. This flag celebrates the ways migrants represent themselves through decoration, made even more resonant by the fact that Philadelphia was the first place in the United States to produce wallpaper.

Artist Bio:

Edward Liddle’s artistic practice is concerned with the re-interpretation of motifs taken from a range of styles and eras, such as architectural remnants, wallpaper, or screenshots from film and television. He transforms these motifs into sculptural objects and site-specific installations that interrogate the materiality and production of mass-produced items. By utilizing a meticulous and intuitive hand-made process, he draws from an extensive archive of imagery to create a unique visual language rooted in play and experimentation.

Center for Peripheries

“Welcoming Soon (After Ken Lum and Šejla Kamerić)” is a response to the constant duality of being an immigrant anywhere in the world. On the one side, being cherished, celebrated for one’s successes and resilience; on the other, being blamed, feared, and always placed under a microscope. This flag is meant to poke fun at this special attention, treading lightly towards the welcoming attitudes and piercing through internalized notions of who is allowed to claim territories (as the gesture of planting a flag connotes), or who is “welcomed” into them, even if they are often shaped by the very contributions of those who arrive from elsewhere.

Artist Collective Bio:

Center for Peripheries is a collective operating at the intersection of social research and space-based art. It was founded by three artists who stem from Europe’s different peripheries (the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans), but reside and collaborate in Berlin—one of Europe’s most significant centers, and the EU’s (statistically) most populous city—which has throughout recent history embodied the dialectic of East and West. Aiming

to explore the relations of power and the mechanisms of othering within and beyond the far ends of this dialectic, Center for Peripheries operates through interventions themed around different notions of everyday life, expanding them into analyses of wider political contexts.

Chloe Luisa Piñero

“I Am Here, We Exist” uses fragmentation to convey the experience of carrying one place into another, a visual intersection of queer and diasporic Puerto Rican identity. The flag brings together handwritten recipes, FaceTime screenshots, photos of landscapes, and family heirlooms from Puerto Rico, alongside images drawn from queer literature, archives, community spaces, and landmarks in Philadelphia. Collecting and celebrating seemingly ordinary moments is a profound act of cultural preservation contributing to an ongoing fight for existence. A flag is a marker of presence: I am here, we exist.

Artist Bio:

Chloe Luisa Piñero received her BFA in Painting and Drawing from Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 2018. In 2024, Piñero was a visiting artist at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2023 she was selected for the Apprenticeship program at The Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, PA, and in 2018 she was the artist in residence at the Jasper Studios Residency Program in Philadelphia, PA. Chloe is a recipient of the 2022 and 2023 Illuminate the Arts Grant. Piñero is currently pursuing an independent study program at The Santissima Community Hub in Naples, Italy.

Martín Pintos

This flag features two opossums, one native to the United States and the other to South America, with an equal sign in the background. The flag symbolizes that we have more in common than differences. The flag seeks to represent how the Latino community integrates and helps strengthen culture and foster harmony among people.

Artist Bio:

Martín Pintos is a Venezuelan graphic designer student. His work is characterized by a bold style that seeks to explore ideas and concepts from unique perspectives. His work focuses primarily on visual identity design, editorial design, print, and artwork.

Keysha Rivera

This flag centers on a scanned film photograph taken by Rivera’s mother in Puerto Rico. This photo was taken a few years after they decided to leave the island. By grounding the image in a personal family moment, the flag becomes a tribute to the histories, identities, and inherited stories carried by Puerto Ricans who have migrated to the US. Layered over the photograph is the text: “There will be Puerto Ricans in PR in the future.” This phrase reflects the displacement and layered emotions that come with migration. Today, more Puerto Ricans are living in the United States than on the island itself: a reality shaped by forced migration and colonialism. At the same time, the phrase carries both hope and assertion. It suggests that leaving is not the only path; staying or returning can also be acts of choice. Even within the constraints of colonialism and displacement, there remains a sense of agency.

Artist Bio:

Keysha Rivera is a technologist, speculative designer, and poetic researcher of afro-indigenous (Taâino) ancestry who practices in the South. Keysha's fusion of digital images, ancestral memory, and textiles is a type of visual storytelling and counter-archiving. Her work, rooted in the connection between material and process, creates sculptures, designs, and installations that explore the conversation around the vulnerability of land, the bodily connection to nature, and the tenderness of remembrance. Keysha has an undergraduate degree in Biology and Design. She's been a resident at Mass Moca, has been awarded a Craft Innovator Grant, and has participated in a show at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft.

Keni Thomas

Philadelphia's resilience comes from its communities. A city of neighborhood rowhomes; under every roof is a story of immigration, migration or generational legacy. In these homes dreams are built and defended.

Artist Bio:

Keni Thomas, more popularly known as Thomcat23, is a visual artist from Philadelphia, PA. His works often focus on social, political, and environmental issues, while pushing unrelated forms and visual puns together. Early in his career, Thomas worked as a graphic designer in the sports marketing world, working with clients including, the Philadelphia 76ers and Philadelphia Flyers, as well as Minor League Baseball, Hockey and Arena League Football, teams. Since that time, Thomcat23 has collaborated with companies such as Nike/ Sneaker-Lab (Now Cultivator), Moment Watches, and other artists.

Aaron Lam Kwok Yam

Originating from a photograph of Aaron Lam Kwok Yam's mother's first visit to the sea, the piece becomes a flag that conveys a sense of distant longing and intergenerational memory of migration. It shifts from private memory to public gesture, fluttering between past and present. The work reflects the strength carried across generations, the courage to leave the familiar, and the quiet endurance that helps navigate life's uncertainties.

Artist's Bio:

Born in 1995 in Guangdong Province, China, Aaron Lam Kwok Yam currently lives and works in Hong Kong. Influenced by the interplay between personal experience and social phenomena, his works explore contemporary notions of migration and diaspora, post-identity politics, and the emotional intricacies embedded within these conditions.